

Jay SHEERER et al.

Reissue Application of Patent No. 6,375,796

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. A method of treating a liquid slurry of comminuted cellulosic fibrous material under cooking conditions in a substantially vertical continuous digester, having at least one substantially annular screen surface, said digester having a substantially cylindrical wall with at least one diameter-changing transition below the cylindrical wall, said method comprising the steps of substantially continuously:

(a) introducing the slurry of comminuted cellulosic fibrous material into the digester adjacent the top thereof, to flow downwardly in the digester in a first cylindrical flow path having a first diameter and defined by the cylindrical wall;

(b) screening the slurry to remove liquid therefrom using the at least one screen surface, having a substantially constant screen surface opening size and percentage of open area, in the first flow path;

(c) during step (b) causing the slurry of comminuted cellulosic fibrous material to transition at the at least one diameter-changing transition from the first cylindrical flow path to a first diverging flow path having an initial second diameter;

(d) after step (c), moving the slurry downward in a second cylindrical flow path, and

(e) removing the chemical pulp from adjacent the bottom of the digester.

Jay SHEERER et al.

Reissue Application of Patent No. 6,375,796

2. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the second diameter is equal to or greater than the first diameter and comprising the further step (f), after step (d), and before step (e), of causing the downwardly moving slurry to move in a second diverging flow path having an initial diameter equal to or greater than the second diameter.

3. A method as recited in claim 2 comprising the further step of repeating steps (b), (c), (d), and (f) at least once prior to step (e).

4. A method as recited in claim 3 wherein both the first and second diverging flow paths diverge at a substantially constant angle to the vertical of between about  $0.5-10^0$ .

5. A method as recited in claim 3 wherein the second flow path diverges at a substantially constant angle to the vertical of between about  $0.5-5^0$ .

6. A method as recited in claim 1 comprising the further step of heating the liquid removed in the practice of step (c) and reintroducing the heated liquid into the digester adjacent where it was removed.

7. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the first diverging flow path diverges at an angle to the vertical of between about  $0.5-10^0$ , and step (b) is practiced using a substantially continuous screen surface.

8. A method as recited in claim 1 wherein the first diverging flow path diverges at a substantially constant angle to the vertical of between about  $0.5-5^0$ .

9. A method as recited in claim 2 comprising the further step of heating the liquid removed in the practice of step (c) and reintroducing the heated liquid into the digester adjacent where it was removed.

Jay SHEERER et al.

Reissue Application of Patent No. 6,375,796

10. A method as recited in claim 2 wherein the second flow path diverges at an angle to the vertical of between about  $0.5-10^0$ , and step (b) is practiced using a substantially continuous screen surface.

11. A method as recited in claim 2 wherein the second flow path diverges at a substantially constant angle to the vertical of between about  $0.5-5^0$ .

12. A method as recited in claim 8 comprising the further step of heating the liquid removed in the practice of step (c) and reintroducing the heated liquid into the digester adjacent where it was removed.

13. A method of treating a liquid slurry of comminuted cellulosic material in a substantially vertical vessel having at least one substantially annular screen surface, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) introducing the slurry into the vessel to flow substantially vertically therein through a first cylindrical passage defined by a cylindrical section of the vessel, and said slurry moving in a flow direction;

(b) while the slurry is flowing in the flow direction and in a diameter transition section of the vessel, below the first cylindrical passage screening the slurry to remove liquid therefrom while causing the liquid to diverge in the flow direction at an angle of between about  $0.5-10^0$  using the at least one screen surface, having a substantially constant screen surface opening size; and

Jay SHEERER et al.

Reissue Application of Patent No. 6,375,796

(c) downstream of (b) in the flow direction and after the slurry flows through a second cylindrical passage below the diameter transition section, removing the slurry from the vessel.

14. A method as recited in claim 13 wherein steps (a)-(c) are practiced substantially continuously, and so that the flow direction is substantially downward.

15. A method as recited in claim 13 wherein the vessel has at least two diameter transitions, and wherein step (b) is practiced at or just downstream of each diameter transition prior to the practice of step (c).

16. A method as recited in claim 13 wherein (b) is practiced to cause the liquid to diverge in the flow direction at an angle of between about  $0.5^{\circ}$ - $5^{\circ}$ .

17. A method as recited in claim 14 wherein the vessel has at least two diameter transitions, and wherein step (b) is practiced at or just downstream of each diameter transition prior to the practice of step (c).